



Welcome Precious

by Nikki Grimes, Orchard Books, an Imprint of Scholastic Inc., 2006

Illustrated by Bryan Collier

Recommended reading for ages 2 and up

SYNOPSIS: A young couple lovingly welcomes their baby to their hearts and home. They welcome their precious one to the surrounding world he/she lives in and teach her/him the meaning of “family.” This is a portrait of affirming love within the African-American community.

NIKKI GRIMES has written a great many award-winning books for children and young adults, including *Bronx Masquerade*, winner of the 2003 Coretta Scott King Author Award and Coretta Scott King Honor books, *Dark Sons*, *Jazmin’s Notebook*, and *Talkin’ About Bessie*, which was published by Orchard Books in 2002. She is the recipient of the 2006 NCTE Award for Excellence in Poetry for Children. She’s also a multimedia and fiber artist. Nikki lives in Corona, CA.

BRYAN COLLIER has illustrated a number of award-winning children’s books, including Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award winners, *Rosa* and *Uptown*, as well as Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor books, *Freedom River*, *Martin’s Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* and *Visiting Langston*, *Rosa* and *Martin’s Big Words* were also Caldecott Honor books. Bryan lives in Harlem with his wife and two-year-old daughter.

Review: “Pooling their rather considerable talents, an acclaimed poet and an award-winning artist create a tender ode to new babies. The text, rich in imagery and lyricism, welcomes a new child into the world, giving a taste of the pleasures that lie ahead. ‘Welcome to the warm circle of your daddy’s arms, the slippery kisses of your giddy grandmother and the cool tickle of mommy’s nose rubbing against your belly button.’ Equally moving are the watercolor and collage depictions of a clearly smitten mother and father caring for their baby.” — 2006 Library Journal

Cultural Significance

Nikki Grimes has written an African-American story about a young couple’s affirmation of love for their precious little one. It is an intimate portrait of a loving family. The story is a departure from common themes of slavery, racism, poverty, homelessness, family issues of divorce, foster homes, etc. found in children’s literature. These themes are reflecting some realities but not all. There are many, many loving intact families. Sometimes, the phrase, “It takes a village to raise a child,” often ignores parents. This particular story reflects the diversity of African-American life in the U.S.

Attending to the details of the book’s illustrations, the family gives the reader the notion of physical closeness in the African-American tradition. The text and watercolor drawings show the affirming and loving gestures everyone has for one another. The storybook invites children to enter the world of Others who look different from them and yet they can relate to the story.

Faith focus:

Apparently, the precious baby is surrounded with loving behaviors from the family members. While one may assume that there will be unconditional love given in this family, how would other babies fare if this were not the case? How would faith formation develop in these families? The portrait of this family in the story is such that one imagines this child will be allowed to nurture and grow as a child ought to be.

Bible passage:

“People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.” Mark 10:13-16 (NRSV)

Children are the metaphor for spiritual purity the world over; “Become as a little child” to enter God’s realm. Embody the innocence and genuineness of a child.

Family activity:

If Jesus were visiting your house, how would your family welcome him?

PRAYER (for children) or one can pray from the heart or just have a silent moment:

Dear God, May we strive to be the loving families we are meant to be to our precious children. In Jesus’ name, Amen.